



THE TWELVE-STEP REVIEW

Fr. Emmerich Vogt, O.P.



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Winter 2016

Dear friends,

Although our Winter issue does arrive after the New Year has begun, nevertheless it is our *Winter 2016* issue, since it was composed in 2016 and sent off to the printer.

I want to point out that, in rereading the last issue before sending it off to the printer, I didn't see my mistake in referring to "God as we understood Him." I called it a part of the second step, when in truth I should have referred to the

third step. I thank a reader (Ed) for pointing out my mistake.

Regarding future missions, I will be giving a mission at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Littleton, Colorado, preaching the weekend Masses of March 5th, and then the mission conferences from Monday, March 6th through Thursday, March 9th.

For those interested in obtaining a beautiful plaque of **Our Lady of Recovery**,

you can purchase them in various sizes from New Guild Studios, who are the ones who wrote (*the word used for the production of an Icon*) the Icon. Their website is:

www.newguildstudio.com

Checking their website, you can see the beautiful artwork they've done for many churches. They are located in Praddock, PA. They did this Icon at the request of the Twelve-Step Review. ✱

The Gift of Peace

Twelve-step meetings often begin with the first part of the Serenity Prayer. The whole prayer, although quite short, sums up for the Christian some important principles of the spiritual life. The second part of the prayer that isn't recited in 12-step meetings relates specifically to Christianity and so is left out, since the founders of AA wanted the program to benefit more than simply the Christian community. However, for those who are Christian, the entire prayer completes the meaning of peace.

It must be significant that the farewell gift that Jesus offers His followers is *peace*:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14:27)

Now just how important is peace in the life of the Christian and for the person who lives in recovery?

We are told by St. Paul (Col 3:15):

Let the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

In the depths of the Christian heart the peace of Christ should reign. To reign is to govern. Peace must govern the heart of the Christian. Such a man of peace doesn't react when he is provoked. He is always alert to do the loving thing, even in dealing with troublesome people.

After Christ is mocked, spit upon, crowned with thorns and crucified, and then rises from the dead and appears to His apostles, what is the first thing He spoke?

Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst, and said to them: "Peace be with you."

Interesting that the first thing He

*Though I walk in the valley of darkness,
I fear no evil.
Psalm 23:4*

speaks is about peace. What was the next thing He said?

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again: "Peace be to you."

Once again: peace. It's also interesting that, although they had forsaken Him in His passion, and Peter even denied Him three times, yet when Jesus finds them hiding in fear of their own people, Jesus doesn't shame them or rub their noses in it. He gives instead a greeting of "peace." Eventually, experiencing the merciful love of Christ and His gift of the Holy Spirit, they will undergo a deeper conversion that will cast out fear from their lives. That's what genuine love does. The person of love is not ruled by fear.

Our relationship with God must be based on an adequate understanding of His true nature. Scripture notes

Continued on the last page.

Blessed are the Peacemakers

This past year has been anything but peaceful. We've seen horrors that we thought belonged only to the ancient world. As I write this, ISIS strapped a nine-year-old girl with a bomb, sent her into the police station in Damascus, and detonated the bomb by remote control. As reported by CNN, Boko Haram Islamists strapped bombs on two 7- and 8-year-old girls in Maiduguri, Nigeria, detonating them as the girls walked through the crowded marketplace.

What's wrong with the world?

You may be familiar with the famous remark reportedly made by G.K. Chesterton when responding to the question, "What's wrong with the world?" Chesterton responded, "I am." Similarly did St. Catherine of Siena remark that the world would be a better place if she herself were holy. There is much truth in what both Catherine and Chesterton say. There can be no world peace without peace in the hearts of people. And I cannot make the hearts of others peaceful, but I can cooperate with God's grace so that the peace of Christ can reign in my heart. As the AA Big Book says, "Hurt people, hurt people; happy people are not likely to harm others." With this in mind, we can take Mother Teresa's advice and show some understanding love, keeping our hearts in peace when confronted by someone in a hostile mood. When we practice the Steps in all our affairs, we learn the art of not reacting when provoked.

Here are some instructions by the Saints on Peace:

- **SAINT DOROTEUS** (feast day June 5) was a Christian monk and abbot of the 6th century. He wrote instructions for monks of which a considerable number have survived and have been compiled into Directions on Spiritual Training. He instructs his monks as follows:

Do not wish for everything to be done according to your determination, but wish that it be how it should be, and in this way, you will attain peace with everyone. And believe that everything that happens to us, even the most insignificant, occurs through God's Providence. Then you will be able to endure everything that comes upon you without any agitation.

- **SAINT FAUSTINA** (feast day October 5) was a Polish nun and mystic. Her claims of receiving apparitions of Jesus Christ inspired the Catholic devotion to the Divine Mercy and earned her the title of "Apostle of Divine Mercy." She quotes Jesus as saying:

Mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to My mercy.

- **SAINT PHILIP NERI** (feast day May 26), known as the Apostle of Rome, was an Italian priest noted for founding the Congregation of the Oratory. Regarding peace, he instructs his followers:

We must sometimes bear with little defects in others, as we have, against our will, to bear with natural defects in ourselves. If we wish to keep peace with our neighbor, we should never remind anyone of his natural defects.

- **SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI** (feast day August 1) was first a lawyer, but discovered a deep thirst to dedicate his life to Christ more fully, and so he became a priest and founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (whose members are called Redemptorists). He tells us:

The more a person loves God, the more reason he has to hope in Him. This hope produces in the Saints an unutterable peace, which they preserve even in adversity, because as they love God, and know how beautiful He is to those who love Him, they place all their confidence and find all their repose in Him alone.

- **SAINT JOHN PAUL** (feast day October 22) reminds us that a peacemaker is not a pacifist. Rather:

Opting for peace does not mean a passive acquiescence to evil or compromise of principle. It demands an active struggle against hatred, oppression and disunity, but not by using methods of violence. Building peace requires creative and courageous action.

- **SAINT TERESA OF CALCUTTA** (feast September 5) would often say:

Works of love are works of peace.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOVERY AND THE MYSTERY OF FAITH (CDs)

In this retreat, given at Casa Maria in Irondale, Alabama, Fr. Emmerich shows how recovery applies to everyone because we are all wounded by sin, and how through cooperating with the grace that Christ offers us to live the Mystery of Faith, we can live happy, virtuous lives. \$35.00, plus shipping and handling.

Casa Maria is run by the Sister Servants (www.sisterservants.org). If you are ever in the area or live nearby, it is a wonderful and peaceful retreat, where each Mass is beautifully sung by the Sisters.

FATHER EMMERICH'S PAMPHLET SERIES:

\$1.00 each. Call for bulk orders. Good for parish pamphlet racks.

1. *The Passions*: deals with the role of our feelings and emotions.
2. *Friendship*: explains the Christian nature of friendship and its importance for healing and recovery.
3. *Sexual Sobriety*: explores recovery from the sin of lust and the need for chastity in Christian life.
4. *The 12-Step Series*: a series of separate pamphlets, one for each of the 12 steps.

THE RULE OF OUR WARFARE (CDs). These conferences continue the very popular “Detaching with Love” series. Fr. Emmerich’s 12-step approach to life and trials will give you encouragement to continue the hard work of overcoming self to continue on the path of recovery from the effects of sin. five conferences, plus homilies, on 6 CDs. \$35.00, plus shipping and handling.

SISTER IGNATIA: Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous is the true story of a Sister of Charity of St. Augustine who, driven by a strong need for perfection and unable to recognize her deep fear of failure, eventually had a total physical and mental breakdown. After her own recovery, she began to help the founders of AA with treating alcoholics at St. Thomas Hospital where she established Rosary Hall, the first treatment center for alcoholics. A wonderful, inspiring, and true story that gives insights into the beginnings of the 12-step movement and the miracles God worked through one person’s sufferings. Softcover, 300 pp., \$18.95, plus shipping and handling. Second Edition.

ADDICTION AND GRACE. Drawing on his experience as a psychiatrist working with the chemically dependent, Dr. May emphasizes that addiction represents an attempt to assert complete control over our lives. *Addiction and Grace* is a compassionate and wise treatment of a topic of major concern in these most addictive of times, one that can provide a critical yet hopeful guide to a place of freedom based on contemplative spirituality. Softcover, \$14.99, plus shipping and handling.

THE WOUNDED HEART: HOPE FOR ADULT VICTIMS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE. Studies indicate that 38% of the women interviewed had been sexually abused by an adult or family member by the age of 18. You may think you don’t know anyone who has been sexually abused, especially if most of your friends and acquaintances are Christians. But the statistics indicate otherwise: Sexual abuse knows no religious or social boundaries. **The Wounded Heart** is an intensely personal and specific look at this most “soul-deadening” form of abuse—personal because it may be affecting you, your spouse, a close friend or neighbor, or someone you know well at church, and specific because it goes well beyond the general issues and solutions discussed in other books. Dr. Allender’s book reaches deep into the wounded heart of someone you know, exploring the secret lament of the soul damaged by sexual abuse—and laying hold of the hope buried there by the One whose unstained image we all bear. Paperback, 301 pp., \$16.95, plus shipping and handling.

Order on-line www.12-step-review.org. Or call us toll free at: 800-556-6177.

that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Enemies of God, however, like to portray Him as vindictive, as the “pay-back God” or the “angry God.” Regarding this, St. Bernard remarks:

My opinion is that all those who lack knowledge of God are those who refuse to turn to Him. I am certain that they refuse because they imagine this kindly disposed God to be harsh and severe, this merciful God to be callous and inflexible, this lovable God to be cruel and oppressive. So it is that wickedness plays false to itself, setting up for itself an image that does not represent Him.

If we always approach God according to His true nature, which is love, fear will be overcome and peace will reign.

Before His ascension Jesus speaks these words:

I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

This tells us that peace is not the absence of trouble. It’s a broken world, full of trials and tribulations. Christ doesn’t promise that if we follow Him, our troubles will be over. He presented us with a vision of the Cross. He didn’t come to explain away suffering or remove it. He came to fill it with His presence. If we follow Him, obeying His commandments, we will transcend the troubles of life, and *at the same time*, have deep inner peace.

The Serenity Prayer stresses the need to surrender our inability to change the past and the need to admit our powerlessness to control the future. It is a common trick of the Devil to bring up people’s sinful pasts to them when they get older, to fill them with guilt and shame. The loving heart of Jesus countered this by telling us, “There is more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than all the goody-two-shoes taken together” (Luke 15:7; my translation). And so I share with people who are in shame over the past the wise saying, “Give up the hope of a better past.” Once we’ve confessed our sins and made our amends, we need to let go.

Living in the here and now is a fundamental concept that affects our spiritual well-being. And a well-being that focuses on ourselves, minding our own business. If we expect, however, that we have some controlling influence over the lives of others, we are setting ourselves up for deep disappointment. Thus the expression,

“An expectation is a premeditated resentment.”

We keep the focus on ourselves, on doing the right and loving thing, learning to detach ourselves from our dependence on persons, places and things outside our control. As St. John Cassian expressed it:

The peace of our spirit does not depend on the good nature and kindness of other people. Our neighbor’s good nature and kindness are in no way subject to our control or opinion. That would be absurd. The tranquility of our heart depends on our selves. The ability to avoid anger, with all its ridiculous effects, has to come from

within our selves and not be dependent on the nature of other people. The power to overcome the evil in our character must not depend on some perfection outside us, but on our own virtue.

Aquinas reminds us, peace is an effect of love. Learning to love as Christ loved us brings lasting peace to our hearts. No one can rob us of this peace, because its source is the Love of God, not the world or the people in it. It is then that we in turn can be Peacemakers. ✨

Thou didst touch me, and I burned for Thy peace. ~St. Augustine

In His will is perfected our peace. ~Dante

We should have much peace if we would not busy ourselves with the sayings and doings of others. ~Thomas à Kempis

To serve the cause of peace is to serve civilization. ~Pope Pius XII

Be at peace with your own soul; then heaven and earth will be at peace with you. ~Saint Jerome

We must sometimes bear with little defects in others, as we have, against our will, to bear with natural defects in ourselves. If we wish to keep peace with our neighbor, we should never remind anyone of his natural defects. ~Saint Philip Neri

Our souls may lose their peace and even disturb other people’s, if we are always criticizing trivial actions — which often are not real defects at all, but we construe them wrongly through our ignorance of their motives. ~Saint Teresa of Avila

Peace is the work of justice indirectly, insofar as justice removes the obstacles to peace; but it is the work of love directly, since love, according to its very notion, causes peace. ~Saint Thomas Aquinas



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